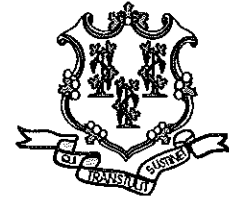




**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**Public Hearing Testimony of
Commissioner Susan I. Hamilton, M.S.W., J.D.**

**Education Committee
March 15, 2010**



**S.B. No. 439 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL STABILITY
FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

The Department of Children and Families **offers the following comments** regarding S.B. No. 439 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL STABILITY FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.

While we recognize that this bill as drafted simply requires the Department of Education to study issues involving educational stability for children in foster care in the state and to report back to the Education Committee by January 1, 2011, we want to bring to the Committee's attention our **support for S.B. No. 31** (File No. 21) - AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING THE EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. This bill was voted out of the Human Services Committee and is currently on the Senate Calendar. We assume that it will ultimately be referred to the Education Committee for your consideration.

Over the past year we have formed a Joint Task Force of representatives from DCF and the State Department of Education, along with the Office of the Child Advocate, Connecticut Voices for Children, the Center for Children's Advocacy, and other stakeholders, to determine the most efficient and cost effective means of implementing the educational provisions of the Fostering Connections Act. The recommendations of this group formed the basis for the language in the Governor's educational stability bill.

S.B. No. 31 enacts the provisions of Public Law 110-351, the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. A key component of this act requires, as a condition of continued receipt of federal IV-E funds, that states take steps to insure the educational stability of foster children by permitting each child, if it's in his or her best interest, to remain in the school of origin even if the foster or relative placement is in a different town. There are additional requirements as well for children whose best interests require that they move to new schools, including immediate enrollment and immediate transfer of school records. **Connecticut is required to implement the federal law by July 1, 2010.**

We believe strongly that providing a child with a stable educational environment is an important consideration when removing a child from his or her home and into foster or relative care. By

far the biggest challenge will be funding the transportation component. Transporting children back to their home school will present some logistical challenges as well but the Department is preparing to solicit proposals to accomplish this in the most cost-effective manner.

Failure to enact this legislation this session will jeopardize the state's ability to seek federal Title IV-E reimbursement for children in out-of-home care. Connecticut receives over \$100 million in Title IV-E funds annually. The Governor's recommended budget adjustment includes funding of \$2.8 million in FY 11 to begin implementation of this new federal mandate. The annualized cost in future years could potentially exceed \$10 million. While this legislation will make Connecticut eligible for partial federal reimbursement, it is estimated that it will be approximately 25 cents on the dollar.

We respectfully request that the Education Committee take **no action on S.B. No. 439 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL STABILITY FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE** and favorably report S.B. No. 31 when it comes before you for consideration. The Department is available to address any questions or concerns that you may have regarding this issue and express our willingness to meet with any interested members of the Committee.